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Press Release

ICE Teams up with Mexican Law Enforcement to arrest Most Wanted Fugitive

WASHINGTON, DC – One of ICE’s most wanted fugitives was arrested in Guadalajara, Mexico Saturday evening by Mexican law enforcement authorities who were assisted by agents from the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Foreign Attaché office in Mexico.

Pedro Castorena was arrested without incident on a provisional arrest warrant. At the time of his arrest Castorena was in possession of two counterfeit Mexican identification documents bearing his photograph but an assumed name.

A federal grand jury in Denver indicted Castorena last July on charges of conspiracy, fraud, misuse of visas and money laundering. The indictment alleges that Castorena is a founding member and the leader of the Castorena Family Organization (CFO), a criminal organization engaged in the nationwide manufacture and distribution of counterfeit immigration and identification documents.

Julie Myers, Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, said, “The arrest of Pedro Castorena is a landmark achievement that deals a serious blow to one of the largest fraudulent document organizations in the United States. As the alleged leader of the Castorena family organization, Castorena has been one of ICE’s ‘Top 10’ most wanted fugitives. This arrest by Mexican authorities and ICE agents stationed abroad proves that international borders are not barriers for fugitives to hide behind.”

“ICE has more than 50 offices in 45 countries working tirelessly with our partners to target cross border and international crime,” Myers said. “In addition, our 11 Document and Benefit Fraud Task Forces around the nation vigorously target criminals involved in producing and distributing fraudulent documents used by illegal aliens.”

The investigation began in October 2000 when agents from ICE, assisted by investigators from the Internal Revenue Service, the Social Security Administration’s Office of Inspector General and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, began investigating the sale and distribution of counterfeit identity documents in Denver, Colorado.

The investigation revealed that Castorena and other members of his criminal organization were allegedly involved in manufacturing and distributing counterfeit identity documents in numerous cities throughout the United States, including Los Angeles; Chicago; Atlanta; Winston-Salem, N.C.; Lincoln, Neb.; Des Moines, Iowa; Albuquerque, N.M.; Denver, Colo.; and other locations throughout the United States.

Following his indictment in July 2005, Castorena was considered a fugitive from justice.

In May 2006, ICE agents in Mexico located Castorena with the assistance of the Mexican authorities from the *Policia Judicial Del Estado* and the *Agencia Federal De Investigaciones*. After ICE obtained a provisional arrest warrant, Mexican authorities arrested Castorena and they are currently holding him, pending extradition, in a detention facility in Mexico City.

Since the beginning of the 2000, ICE agents nationwide have arrested and presented for prosecution 50 members of the CFO and associated organizations. During these investigations, agents have seized counterfeit identity document manufacturing laboratories and tens of thousands of blank counterfeit identity documents.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.